

Request for Applications
Fiscal Year 2020 Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Projects

The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) solicits a request for applications for Fiscal Year 2020 Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Projects. The total amount of the grants to be awarded under this request for applications by the TWDB shall not exceed \$1,200,000 from the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund. The rules governing the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund (31 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 367) and application instructions are available upon request from the TWDB.

Summary of the Request for Applications

Solicitation Date (Opening): Date published in the *Texas Register*

Due Date (Closing): 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 20, 2020

Anticipated Award Date: June 2020

Estimated Total Funding: up to \$1,200,000 total

Eligible Grant Amount: up to \$1,200,000, subject to Board approval

Eligible applicants: state agencies and political subdivisions (as defined by 31 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 367)

Contact: Cameron Turner, Agricultural Water Conservation, Texas Water Development Board, P.O. Box 13231, Austin, Texas 78711-3231, Phone: (512) 936-6090, E-mail: cameron.turner@twdb.texas.gov

Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Program Goals

Applications must be consistent with the format provided in the Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Application Instructions document. Please contact the TWDB if you intend to apply. Projects awarded funding must further water conservation in the state and support the implementation of water conservation water management strategies in the state water plan (Texas Water Code §§17.900–17.902; 31 Texas Administrative Code §367.5). Applications must meet the eligibility criteria and achieve one or more of the following goals:

- (A) improve irrigation efficiency through irrigation system improvements and the adoption of irrigation scheduling practices
- (B) advance soil health initiatives and enhance resilience to weather extremes and climate variability
- (C) promote innovation in agriculture by incorporating the latest water conservation technological advancements

To achieve these goals, the project description, scope of work, and deliverables should incorporate the following actions and objectives

- (1) engage agricultural producers and water managers through educational outreach in the form of field days, workshops, seminars, and demonstrations in classroom settings and on farms involved in the projects;
- (2) promote the adoption of innovative water conservation practices and technologies that result in improvements to irrigation efficiency, soil health, and soil moisture retention;
- (3) identify methods to measure and report water conservation performance metrics such as water savings, soil water holding capacity, soil moisture content, plant available water, and infiltration; and
- (4) build upon the success of existing efforts and leverage the support of local, state, federal, and private industry partners.

Eligible costs are those directly attributed to the project including planning, design, purchase, acquisition, installation, construction, monitoring, reporting, educational outreach, and dissemination of project findings. Indirect expenses such as the applicant's overhead are not eligible for reimbursement and will not count towards the local match when being evaluated by the technical review team.

Funding recipients must submit annual reports, irrigation water use data, and an estimate of actual water savings realized through the implementation of the project for a period of three to five years during the project. Additional details and the exact scope of work will be negotiated with selected applicant(s) and may include a comprehensive final report upon completion.

Grant Amount

Through this announcement, the TWDB has up to \$1,200,000 available from the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund for Fiscal Year 2020 agricultural water conservation grants. The TWDB awards these funds through a statewide competitive grants process. The TWDB evaluates all proposals based upon the specific criteria set forth in this solicitation and application instructions. Unless otherwise specified, eligible expenses typically include the cost of the capital equipment, materials, labor, preparation, installation, or administration directly associated with implementing and completing a conservation program or project. Indirect costs are not allowed as an eligible expense for reimbursement or local match through this request for applications.

Application Criteria and Selection Process

Prior to technical review, each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications and those that do not meet the provisions of this notice and the requirements of 31 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 367.5–367.7, as identified in the application instructions, may be eliminated from competition. Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be scored by a technical review panel. 31 Texas Administrative Code Sections 367.8 and 367.9 require that in reviewing an application for an agricultural water conservation grant, the TWDB shall consider (1) degree to which the applicant has used other available resources to finance the use for which the application is being made (political subdivisions only); (2) willingness and ability of the applicant to raise revenue (political subdivisions only); (3) commitment of the applicant to agricultural water conservation; and, (4) the benefits that will be gained by making the grant.

Prior to approving a grant, the TWDB must find that the grant funds will (1) supplement rather than replace money of the applicant; (2) serve the public interest (in making this finding the TWDB shall include a finding that the grant will assist in the implementation of a water conservation water management strategy identified in the most recent applicable approved regional water plan or state water plan); and, (3) further water conservation in the state.

In addition to the required considerations and findings, the technical review panel will further evaluate the applications using the following criteria: (1) sound and practical approach for implementing project as per the Request for Applications guidelines; (2) clearly identified tasks, products, and reporting timelines; (3) staff with the technical expertise needed to carry out the project; and, (4) proposed costs estimate (budget) that are reasonable and adequately justified. Additionally, priority consideration may be given to projects that achieve multiple goals and include all actions and objectives identified in the Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Program Goals. All applicants must establish a metric for measuring and reporting water savings or improvements in water use efficiency as a direct result of project funding.

Funding and Partial Funding Provisions

The TWDB reserves the right to reject all proposals and make no awards under this announcement. In addition, the TWDB reserves the right to partially fund proposals by funding discrete activities, portions, or phases of a proposed project. TWDB also reserves the right to award funding in an amount greater than any stated limits per project, if applicable. If the TWDB decides to partially fund a proposal, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the proposal, or portion thereof, was evaluated or selected for award, and that maintains the integrity of the

competition and the evaluation/selection process. The TWDB reserves the right to reject parts of, any, or all applications if staff determines that the application(s) does not adequately meet the required criteria or if the funding available is less than the requested funding. The TWDB also retains the right to not award contract funds.

Negotiations with Selected Applicants

The applicable scope of work, deliverables, timelines, budgets, and contract terms will be negotiated after the TWDB awards the selected applicants. Failure to arrive at mutually agreeable terms of a contract with the selected applicant shall constitute a rejection of the Board's offer and may result in subsequent negotiations with other applicants.

Deadline for Submission of Applications

Submit four double-sided, double-spaced paper copies and one digital copy of completed application(s) to the TWDB on or before 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 20, 2020.

Applications can be directed either in person to David Carter, Texas Water Development Board, Stephen F. Austin Building, Room 640G, 1700 North Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701; or by mail to David Carter, Texas Water Development Board, P.O. Box 13231 – Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711-3231. Application instructions are available upon request from Cameron Turner, (512) 936-6090, cameron.turner@twdb.texas.gov, or online at <http://www.twdb.texas.gov>.